

## **The Boundaries of Public Diplomacy and Non-State Actors: A Taxonomy of Perspectives**

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Public diplomacy (PD) lacks an agreed-upon definition and boundaries. The ambiguity surrounding the nature of conceptualization of the term leads to confusion among scholars and practitioners and hinders the consolidation of PD as an academic field. This article surveys 160 articles and books on PD and categorizes diverse perspectives into a taxonomy and explores the coherence of each: State-Centric Perspectives, Neo-Statist Perspectives, Nontraditional Perspectives, Society-Centric Perspectives and Accommodative Perspectives. The article maps the boundaries of public diplomacy with much-needed clear and coherent criteria and positions PD within the broader discipline of International Relations (IR).

**Keywords:** public diplomacy, non-state actors, taxonomy, diplomacy studies, international relations theories

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In his *International Studies Perspectives* article, Stuart Murray (2008) raised the confusion caused by the disparity of views on diplomacy. He attempted to “consolidat[e] the gains made in diplomacy studies” by building a taxonomy of diplomatic thoughts.<sup>1</sup> Murray’s (2008, 34) article clarified the main discrepancies

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar taxonomy, see Hocking et al. (2012).



between three schools of diplomacy to introduce “order, clarity, and purpose to the diplomatic studies field.” His grounded appraisal of diplomatic studies indicates that the major debate in the field is the place of non-state actors (NSAs) in diplomacy, resulting from their recent rise in world politics.

The field of public diplomacy (PD) begs for a similar taxonomy since the confusion is more frustrating than the case of diplomacy studies. Indeed, this research was initiated to address the frustration of the author’s students since each article they read throughout the PD course had discordant definitions of the term. It is argued that the disparity of perspectives on PD, particularly regarding NSAs’ place in this realm, must be “classified and consolidated” (Murray 2008, 23) to have a clearer understanding of PD is and how it works. This requires a closer look at how articles in the field define PD and on what grounds they differ from each other. Only then can one understand the trends in this realm and negotiate diverse perspectives behind the conceptualization of PD.

This article aims to map the boundaries of PD as an initial step in theory-building in this relatively new field. In parallel to diplomatic studies, the central debate in recent PD research concerns the role and place of these new actors (see Huijgh, Gregory, and Melissen 2013). To clarify this subject, this article investigates how scholars conceptualize PD and how they see the place of NSAs in it. An analysis of the diverse approaches to PD leads to a taxonomy of five broad groups:

1. State-Centric Perspectives which restrict PD to state agencies in a coherent way rejecting diplomatic actorness of NSAs completely;
2. Neo-Statist Perspectives, which reserve the term PD for states only, while offering alternative terms such as social *diplomacy* or grassroots *diplomacy* for NSAs’ similar activities;
3. Nontraditional Perspectives which define diplomacy based not on status, but on capabilities accepting some of NSAs’ activities as PD;
4. Society-Centric Perspectives which share most traits with Nontraditional Perspectives, except that they define *public* as people in the global *public* sphere;
5. Accommodative Perspectives which accommodate NSAs’ activities within the realm of PD, but only if those activities meet certain criteria.

The labels for each group of perspectives are for illustrative purposes only. Through this taxonomy, PD scholars and practitioners can more precisely identify weaknesses and strengths of each perspectives and further studies in the field can use more consistent approaches.

This article addresses inconsistencies and analytical problems in each category of the perspectives. In the



last part of the article, coherent criteria for the boundaries of PD are compiled and suggested to contribute more exclusivity to the Accommodative Perspectives which, accordingly, makes the views in this article fit into this fifth group of views.

Based on a SCOPUS search, 185 most-cited articles (cited five or more times as of 30 July 2017) with the exact term “public diplomacy” in the title, keywords and/or abstracts were selected. In all, 25 articles were removed, because it was not possible to identify how they conceptualized PD or how they view the place of NSAs in it. In some of these articles, PD is used interchangeably with other terms such as nation-branding or nation’s image (Chua and Pang 2012; Dinnie et al. 2010; Peijuan, Ting, and Pang 2009; Van Ham 2008), soft power (Brown 2008; Wilson III 2008), international public relations (Lee 2006, 2007; Lee and Hong 2012; Scott 2013), strategic communication (Dimitriu 2012), international broadcasting (Price 2009), persuasion (Van Evera 2006), propaganda (Willen 2015) and pressure politics (Gorman 2008). The taxonomy in this article is built based on an analysis of the remaining 160 articles.

The article begins with a conceptualization of PD. International Relations (IR) theories’ approaches to PD are reviewed to position this new concept within its broader discipline. In the next section, NSAs’ place within the realm of PD is discussed. Following this introduction, in the third section, five groups of perspectives are identified and categorized in a taxonomy particularly based on how they view the boundaries of PD. The last section summarizes the findings and offers implications for PD research and practice.

### **The Concept of Public Diplomacy**

PD is classically defined as “the means by which governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions” (The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at The Fletcher School 2002; see also Delaney 1968, 3; Malone 1985, 199). Recent literature, often referred to as “new public diplomacy” (Melissen 2005b; Seib 2009)<sup>2</sup>, takes a more two-way approach to PD as “an instrument used by states,

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<sup>2</sup> Following September 11, PD evolved into new public diplomacy (NPD), which accommodates new objectives, new actors, and the new environment in which PD is practiced. Particularly since the introduction of NPD, the debate on the boundaries of PD started. Previously state agencies were assumed to be the only initiators of PD initiatives, while



associations of states, and some sub-state agencies and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behavior; to build and manage relationships; and to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory 2008b, 276). In line with the literature on NPD, Cull (2008) suggests a taxonomy of PD practices: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. Fitzpatrick (2010) also surveys the PD literature and suggests six main functions: advocacy, communication, relationship management, promotion, political engagement, and warfare.<sup>3</sup> This article uses Gregory’s definition, which better reflects the environment of new PD, compared to earlier definitions, as NSAs are more empowered than ever, capable and willing to participate in PD-like activities. However, this definition is also imperfect as it lacks boundaries in regard to what PD is not and who PD actors are not. The latter part of this article offers modifications to this definition.

PD can be used as an instrument that cultivates and wields soft power (Nye 2008; see also Hayden 2012), which can be defined as “the power to construct the preferences and images of self and others through ideational or symbolic resources that lead to behavioral changes of others” (Lee 2010, 116).<sup>4</sup> Why is there a need to engage foreign publics to “influence foreign policy decisions” (The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at The Fletcher School 2002) or “to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory 2008b, 276)? The need to engage foreign publics is mainly due to developments in the last century which empowered individuals and NSAs and made them more relevant in world politics. These developments include globalization, which created greater interconnections between people in different countries; technological advancements, which made it easier and less expensive for individuals to travel, communicate, and network internationally, access and produce information; and waves of democratization and liberalization which made public opinion matter in most societies.<sup>5</sup>

While the argument above is almost uncontested in any theoretical debates in IR, there are different approaches as to how much and in what ways empowerment of people and NSAs influence *the* international

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NSAs could only be instrumental in achieving state-centric initiatives. Indeed, only eight (4%) out of the 185 most-cited articles were written before September 11, while 177 articles were written after.

<sup>3</sup> Warfare as a function of public diplomacy is problematic, since diplomacy fundamentally concerns avoidance of war.

<sup>4</sup> See Hayden (2012) for more on the nexus between PD and soft power.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the evolution of the term PD, see Cull (2009), Fitzpatrick (2012, 435) and Zaharna (2010, 81-88).



system. Realists hold that ultimately, only states can make any difference in the international system. Liberals maintain that states are central to the international system, but key individuals and NSAs have a critical influence in the formation of state behavior (see e.g. Moravcsik 1997). Therefore, liberals are interested in PD's potential to build relations and eventually influence key individuals (Nye 2004, 109-110). Constructivists argue that individuals and NSAs can play important roles in changing the current discourses in the international system by influencing reconstruction of prevalent ideas, norms, beliefs and, in turn, the interests of states about their surroundings.

For realists, individuals and NSAs, at best, can affect low political issues such as culture and social policies and are not able to make a difference in high political issues such as peace and security. While realist perspectives of PD are discussed in the literature (Yun and Toth 2009), it would be inconsistent and hypocritical for realists to expect significant returns from investment in communication with foreign publics.

On the other hand, Keohane and Nye (1971a, 728-729) argue that “distinctions between high and low politics are of diminishing value,” since developments in the last century, which are mentioned above, led “[h]igh and low politics [to] become tightly intertwined.” Their “world politics paradigm” and issue-areas approaches<sup>6</sup>, which are common in transnationalism and global governance literature, support the idea that individuals and NSAs might matter as much as states or even have more authority<sup>7</sup> in certain issue areas such as global finance, the environment, and human rights. Accordingly, issue-areas approaches better explain investing in PD through which the actors engage the publics to increase the odds of certain outcomes in specific issue areas in the international or global stage.

Furthermore, the PD objectives of shaping societal and potentially state interests through engaging foreign publics sit better with constructivism rather than IR theories associated with rationalism. That is because if the actors that matter in the world politics are assumed to be rational, then there is not much point in indirectly manipulating or influencing their decisions by engaging with their publics. On the other hand, if the actors in world politics are seen as “cognitive actors” who are “purposive, conditioned by bounded rationality and regular cognitive propensities” (Rosati 2000, 73; see also Wendt 1992), then there is room to construct and reconstruct these actors' interests through mediated or interpersonal exposures by employing PD initiatives.

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<sup>6</sup> For more on issue-area approaches, see Arts (2003), Peinhardt and Sandler (2015), Risse-Kappen (1995) and Rosenau (1995).

<sup>7</sup> For more on “authority,” see Avant, Finnemore, and Sell (2010, 12-14) and Rosenau (1997, 407-411).



Constructivists pointed out the potential agency of epistemic communities, transnational advocacy networks, key individuals, as well as international organizations and state agencies, in diffusing ideas and values through transnational and international interactions which, in turn, lead to reconstructing societal and state interests (Deacon 2007; Haas 1992; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Wendt 1992). PD initiatives are instrumental in achieving such constructivist goals. Therefore, most PD discussions fit into the constructivist framework, while the differences between PD conceptualizations resemble those of the constructivist IR scholars, which are explained below.

Two groups of perspectives in the taxonomy, State-Centric Perspectives and Neo-Statist Perspectives, regard only states' activities as PD, while the other three, Nontraditional, Society-Centric and Accommodative Perspectives, leave the door open for NSAs' activities to be characterized as PD. The former two are implicitly inclined to view IR from a state-centric perspective with rationalist tendencies and are uneasy about calling NSAs' activities PD because of this theoretical conviction. Nor are scholars employing these perspectives realists, as they devote their research to a "frivolous and trivial" (Van Ham 2008, 20) kind of diplomacy that engages foreign publics and not official agents of sovereigns. The distinction between the two former perspectives and the latter three is more similar to the division within the constructivist camp over state-centric systemic theories of IR.<sup>8</sup>

Systemic theories of IR, including the "'conventional' strand [of constructivism], which shares the anarchy problematique with neorealists and neoliberals" (Hurd 2008, 309), downplay the role of NSAs in world politics. Scholars who hold state-centric PD perspectives share these views. On the other hand, there is more room for NSAs to participate in world politics in issue-areas approaches or what Hurd (2008, 309) refers to as the "'post-anarchy' strand" of constructivism. Scholars who hold that NSAs can also do PD belong to this camp. Indeed, this theoretical division is the most significant cleavage among the PD scholars. The next section introduces the debate regarding the role of NSAs in the realm of PD.

### **Non-State Actors in the Realm of Public Diplomacy**

A central issue in the field of PD is whether it is exclusively a state-centric practice or if activities of NSAs

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<sup>8</sup> For more on divisions among constructivists, see Hurd (2008, 308), Snidal (2013, 107-109), Wendt (1999, 353).



can also be labeled as PD. In this article, NSAs are viewed as those that are relevant to IR and operate at the international or transnational level (Arts 2003, 5; Arts, Noortmann, and Reinalda 2001; Reinalda 2001, 13). There is near agreement in the recent literature that NSAs are important to PD. However, the question of regarding NSAs' activities as PD is tackled differently by two camps of PD researchers. While more communication scholars (49% of the sample) do not mind extending PD activities beyond state agencies, political scientists (34% of the sample) are warier of treating NSAs as PD actors because of actorness' heavy connotations in IR theories.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars<sup>10</sup> regard NSAs as important partners in state-centric PD, but not as actors per se, whereas others<sup>11</sup> treat them as independent actors in their own right.

It is widely accepted in the literature that state-centric PD alone falls short of achieving effective PD outcomes, particularly in the long-term.<sup>12</sup> State agencies' "built-in disadvantage and an inherent weakness" (Attias 2012, 475), namely "public skepticism" (Leonard, Stead, and Smewing 2002, 54) and "distrust" of people (Payne 2009a, 603; Nye 2004, 113), may potentially be better remedied by NSAs and individuals on the ground who are more credible in the eyes of the foreign publics engaged (Gilboa 2008, 73, 281-282; Lee and Ayhan 2015, 61; Payne 2009a, 604; Rasmussen 2010, 268). NSAs' activities, in collaboration with state agencies or independent of them, complement official efforts for more effective PD outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, most PD scholars do not clearly indicate which NSA activities should be classified as PD and/or what kind of NSAs can be labeled as PD actors. This ambiguity regarding the place of NSAs in PD

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<sup>9</sup> 53 of 160 articles (33%) were published in three journals: Public Relations Review (PRR) (19 articles), The Hague Journal of Diplomacy (HJD) (18 articles) and American Behavioral Scientist (ABS) (16 articles). An interesting finding in this research is that HJD is much more likely to publish articles which accept NSAs' activities as PD (72%) compared to PRR (32%) and ABS (31%). Overall, the ratio is 41% in all 160 articles.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Hall (2012), Kennedy and Lucas (2005), Malone (1985), Pahlavi (2007), Peterson (2002), Ross (2002), Scott-Smith (2006) and Van Ham (2003).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Cowan and Arsenault (2008), Fitzpatrick (2007), Gilboa (2008), Gregory (2008b, 2011), Nye (2008), Ordeix-Rigo and Duarte (2009) and Zaharna (2007).

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Armitage and Nye (2007), Attias (2012), Cabral et al. (2014), Lord (2008), Seo (2013), Snow (2008), The U.S. Department of State (2010) and Zatepilina (2010).

<sup>13</sup> For more on state agencies' collaboration with NSAs for PD initiatives, see Lee and Ayhan (2015) and Zaharna and Uysal (2016).



impedes the “sunrise of [PD as] an academic field” (Gregory 2008b). The lack of agreement on at least a minimal definition and the boundaries of PD has academic and practical implications.

Diplomacy studies are often considered as being “short on theory” (Jönsson 2002, 215; see also Der Derian 1987). The field of PD is even shorter as the “[search] for a theory of public diplomacy” (Gilboa 2008; Pamment 2017) continues. The greatest obstacle in solidifying a theory of PD, particularly one that concerns the place of NSAs, is a deficiency of boundaries. The boundaries are a must for theory-building, according to Dubin (1978, 125), who said “in order that a model may represent an empirical system, it has to have boundaries corresponding to the empirical system. The boundaries are important to the specification of any theoretical model.” This article lays the foundation for further PD theory-building by mapping the much-needed boundaries of PD with distinct criteria.

There are also practical implications of blurry boundaries. Failure to build a common understanding of NSAs’ role in PD has impeded any realization of the untapped potential of NSAs. It is difficult to frame the activities and functions of NSAs in PD without the presence of analytical boundaries. Furthermore, empirical research on NSAs’ activities related to PD should be generalizable to certain types of NSAs (Vakil 1997, 2057), which requires boundaries. While this article is an initial step to that end as part of the larger research project, building this typology of PD actors is beyond the scope of this article. Lacking these boundaries, we end up treating all kinds of transnational activities of NSAs under the banner of non-state PD which indeed have nothing in common except for not being initiated by state agencies.

In significant studies<sup>14</sup>, NSAs’ activities which have unintentional consequences and no clear PD agendas are referred to as non-state PD. These scholars refer to non-state PD superficially without providing details and the criteria to make NSAs’ activities PD. However, in the case of most NSAs, their engagement in PD is rather unintentional as they contribute outcomes for others (e.g. their home countries’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs) without having a prioritized PD agenda. In other words, most NSAs do not have PD agendas, but the outcomes of their activities may overlap with some states’ PD objectives. The unintentional contributions of NSAs are significant and must be analyzed to explore its untapped potential. However, for the sake of analytical clarity, these activities should be regarded as unintentional contributions rather than as PD activities

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<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Nye (2004), Seib (2009), d’Hooghe (2015), Zaharna (2010), Melissen (2005a), Gilboa (2008), Hocking (2005), L’Etang (2009), Kelley (2009), Leonard et al. (2002), Riordan (2005), Sharp (2005), Szondi (2009) and Van Ham (2013).



per se.<sup>15</sup>

If there are no clear boundaries to distinguish intentional PD objectives from unintentional PD outcomes of NSAs, then every transnational communication of every entity can fall into the realm of PD (La Porte 2012, 449). Some scholars<sup>16</sup> mention the problem of the blurry boundaries of PD but offer little or no insights into this issue. The taxonomy in the next section aims to address the issue of an unconsolidated definition of PD by attempting a research appraisal of the field and mapping the boundaries.

### **A Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy Perspectives**

In this section, disparate PD perspectives in the 160 selected articles are analyzed and categorized into a taxonomy of five groups of perspectives. The conceptualizations of public diplomacy, particularly meanings of *public* and *diplomacy* in these articles are investigated. Furthermore, the articles are analyzed with an eye to whether they treat NSAs' activities as PD, and if they do whether any boundaries determine what is and is not PD. Where boundaries of PD are not clear, it is found that the conceptualizations of PD analytically are not coherent, but rather vague. In the last part of this section, the criteria for analytical boundaries of PD are compiled and summarized.

#### *State-Centric Perspectives*

Out of 160 articles, 94 articles defined PD in state-centric terms without any reference to NSAs' activities. The most common definition used in these studies is that of Tuch (1990, 3), who defines PD as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.” However, none of the articles explicitly argued that NSAs' activities cannot be regarded as PD. Most of these articles empirically analyzed a governmental PD initiative with a state-centric definition of PD

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<sup>15</sup> See Zatepilina's (2009; 2010; 2012) work, among others, for an example of NGOs' unintentional contributions to the United States' PD.

<sup>16</sup> See Brown (2013b, 53), Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, and Kendrick (2013, 36), Henderson (1973, XXI-XXVII), Melissen (2013, 449), Wiseman (2015, 13, 298), and Zöllner (2009, 266).



without any reference to NSAs. Golan, in his extended chapter (2015, 417) based on his selected article (Golan 2013), emphasizes that his “definition of public diplomacy is government based,” as he considers “government as the primary organization and foreign publics as the primary publics.” Responding to this vital question, Brown (2013a) holds that PD “is the way that it is because it is done by states,” and he does not treat NSAs’ activities as PD “unless they are acting on behalf of states.”

Those against the idea of referring to NSAs’ activities as PD have two types of reservations. The first and most common type of reservation is that public *diplomacy* is a kind of *diplomacy* which requires *status* to practice it. The second type of reservation, which is not mainstream, is that *public* in *public* diplomacy implies state agencies as the subject of the initiative. In order to address these two reservations, we need to disaggregate the term *public diplomacy* into its components.

The first type of reservation is about the word *diplomacy* in public diplomacy. Scholars who refuse to recognize NSAs’ activities as PD do so particularly based on what the word *diplomacy* entails. For these scholars, NSAs’ activities are not PD or any other combinations that involve *diplomacy* for that matter, since NSAs’ activities “have little to do with the functions and objectives of diplomacy” (Hocking et al. 2012, 10).<sup>17</sup> In a similar vein, McDowell (2008, 10) contends that the word “diplomacy” entails “a role for the state,” while the word “public” refers to the people rather than the state, because PD “takes place in public.” He accepts that NSAs conduct similar activities without government direction, but argues that these activities cannot be regarded as PD if there is no government direction to achieve particular goals.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, if one agrees with the idea that diplomacy requires *status*, then for consistency’s sake, one should avoid using terms such as social diplomacy and people-to-people diplomacy for NSAs’ activities. Sending et al. (2011, 536) argue that while some NGOs might be performing “some elements of diplomatic practice,” which are “negotiation, representation, information- gathering and communication,” they are not performing all of them and their activities cannot be treated as diplomacy, which “is an institutionalized feature of the state system.” In a similar vein, Sharp (1997, 630-631) argues that diplomats’ representation of their states has political significance beyond symbolic meaning and no profession, however capable it is thought to

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<sup>17</sup> While Hocking et al. (2012,20) question vague usage of *diplomacy*, their categorization of *diplomatic* domains into intergovernmental, multi-layered, private and loose coupling begs the same question of which (shared) processes and practices in these domains have to do with the functions and objectives of diplomacy.

<sup>18</sup> For a similar discussion, see Potter (2008, 33-34)



be, would be able to replace it and be as effective as diplomats. These categoric rejections of non-state PD fit into the State-Centric Perspectives in the taxonomy. These approaches to PD are similar to the Traditional School of Diplomacy, in Murray's taxonomy, which "emphasize the centrality of the state to diplomacy" (Murray 2008, 28).

### *Neo-Statist Perspectives*

While 92 out of 94 articles reviewed categorically reject NSAs' activities in the realm of PD, two articles suggest alternative terms for NSAs' PD-like activities. Lam (2007) refers to the British Premier League's influence in China as "informal public diplomacy," while adopting a state-centric understanding of PD. Furthermore, Sevin, Kimball, and Khalil (2011) quote Payne's "grassroots diplomacy" (Payne 2009b; see also Payne, Sevin, and Bruya 2011) and Czubek's "social diplomacy" (Czubek 2002; see also Sevin and Salcıgil White 2011; Van Doeveren 2011) terms as alternatives to public diplomacy for NSAs' activities in this realm. Like Czubek, Van Doeveren (2011, 18-19) distinguishes between "public diplomacy," which is "a component of national diplomatic practice," and "social diplomacy," which "refers to the activity that pursues PD goals but that moves beyond the confined limits of diplomats."

These suggestions represent the second reservation concerning the use of the term PD for the activities of NSAs. This reservation stems from the term *public*: does it mean the receiving end, the foreign publics who are addressed, or does it refer to the subject of PD, state agencies? Almost all articles in the sample, except two (Castells 2008; Lindholm and Olsson 2011), explicitly or implicitly define the *public* in PD as the foreign publics who are the target audiences or stakeholders. However, the terms "social diplomacy," "informal public diplomacy" and "grassroots diplomacy" are suggested as alternatives to non-state PD, which shows discontent with the word *public*. These alternative terms have the term *diplomacy* in common, yet it is not clear why the PD-like activities of NSAs cannot be labeled as PD but must be termed "something-else" diplomacy, which threatens the usefulness of the concept.<sup>19</sup> Alternative notions of non-state diplomacy in this mold fit within the Neo-Statist Perspectives in the taxonomy, as they feature a rather state-centric understanding of *PD* and reserve the term *public*, but not necessarily the term *diplomacy*, for state agencies. Proponents of alternative terms for non-state PD offer only a vague distinction between what is PD and what is not. Their approaches lack conceptual clarity compared to the more rigid boundaries provided by State-Centric Perspectives, above,

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<sup>19</sup> For similar observations, see Hayden (2011b) and Riordan (2017).



and Accommodative Perspectives, below.

From an analytical standpoint, State-Centric Perspectives are more coherent than are Neo-Statist Perspectives, but they are similarly outdated because of their insistence on not recognizing NSAs as PD actors. The argument against these state-centric perspectives is built through the analysis of Nontraditional, Society-Centric and Accommodative Perspectives below.

### *Nontraditional Perspectives*

Out of 160 selected articles, 66 articles treat NSAs' some activities as PD. Nevertheless, 62 articles offer no boundaries between which NSAs' activities can be regarded as PD and which cannot. The four articles that suggest criteria for NSAs' activities to be PD belongs to the Accommodative Perspectives.

As a reaction to the denial of NSAs' place in diplomacy and PD, many scholars tackled the first reservation by defining diplomatic action not by the *status* but by the *capabilities* of the actors.<sup>20</sup> Kelley's (2010) argument that NSAs are now non-state diplomatic actors (NDAs), beyond being new actors in PD, is cited in some of these articles. According to Kelley, NDAs' actions lead to disruption of the traditional diplomacy and give way to new diplomacy suggesting "agency change" (Kelley 2014) in diplomacy. Kelley's main argument is that diplomacy should be defined based on the diplomacy of *capabilities* as opposed to the diplomacy of *status*. NDAs do not have the legal *status* to represent their states as diplomats, but they have diplomatic *capabilities* and sources of legitimate representation that make them actors in the field of diplomacy and disrupt the monopoly of states' diplomacy of *status*. In a similar vein, but in contrast to his 1997 view cited above, Sharp (1999, 55) argues "it is becoming increasingly plausible to claim that more people are so employed and more are 'diplomats' ... viewing diplomacy as representation."

The arguments regarding diplomacy of capabilities imply that the borders of diplomacy are blurred, and diplomatic action is highly decentralized and partially relocated to NSAs such as NGOs and transnational

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<sup>20</sup> Scholars have used various other terms to refer to this phenomenon making similar arguments including diplomacy of behaviour, diplomacy of effectiveness, diplomacy of expressiveness, diplomacy as representation, process-based diplomacy, and practices-based diplomacy among others (Kelley 2014; Young and Henders 2016, 355-356; Jönsson 2008, 34; Kelley 2010, 288; Henrikson 2013, 120; Hocking et al. 2012, 38, 52; Henders and Young 2016, 333-334; Scholte 2008, 55-56; Sharp 1999, 51, 55).



advocacy networks (Hocking 2004, 149-150; Kelley 2014, 19, 108; Rosenau 1997, 44, 61-64). While diplomacy is often assumed to be a monopoly of states and requiring statecraft, such claims can more easily be adapted to PD, which has included the public and NSAs since the coining of the term. In short, these scholars argue that PD “exists wherever its core capabilities<sup>21</sup> are to be found, which requires extending the identification of [its actors] beyond simply who they are to include what they do” (Kelley 2014, 101). In turn, states’ exclusive monopoly on diplomatic activities, including PD activities, is shaken as NSAs became more active and mattered more in transnational affairs (Hocking et al. 2012, 10-23; Kelley 2014; Melissen 2005a, 22-25; Ronfeldt and Arquilla 2007; Weiss 2000, 810).

Although “NSAs are becoming more important than states as initiators of change,” it is still implausible to suggest that NSAs have become units of analysis in the “*inter-national*” (emphasis added) system, since “system change ultimately happens *through* states” (emphasis in the original) (Wendt 1999, 9, 353). Similarly, Sending and Neumann (2006, 657; see also Van Rooy 1999; Kleiner 2008) argue that NSAs have become the subject of governance in addition to long being an object as they ascended in “shaping and carrying out global governance-functions.” However, this does not imply power transfer from the state to NSAs in a zero-sum way; rather it is better explained by “political power operat[ing] through” (Sending and Neumann 2006, 658) civil society. This argument is the main difference between the traditionalist camp (State-Centric and Neo-Statist Perspectives) which emphasize NSAs as potential partners in state-led PD, and nontraditional camp (Nontraditional, Society-Centric and Accommodative Perspectives) which hold that NSAs can also conduct PD independently.

Still, arguing for NSAs’ diplomatic actorness does not mean actorness in the international system. After all, diplomacy is but one way that states, and possibly NSAs, interact in the system, more so in specific issue-areas, and diplomacy itself is not the system. Actorness in PD, which deals more with low politics issues such as culture and people-to-people exchanges, is a weaker and hence more acceptable claim than diplomatic actorness, and obviously more acceptable than being an actor in the international system.

Nonetheless, the diplomacy of capabilities approach holds two risks. First, following this logic, almost any

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<sup>21</sup> For more on diplomatic capabilities or functions, see Cooper and Hocking (2000), Sending, Pouliot, and Neumann (2011), Neumann (2008), Henders and Young (2016), Jönsson and Hall (2003), Murray (2008) and Young and Henders (2016); for PD functions, see Cull (2008), Fitzpatrick (2010), Gregory (2008b), Leonard et al. (2002) and Kelley (2009).



transnational interaction can be called PD (Gregory 2016, 3-4; Wiseman 2015, 298-299). Having authority based on expertise or capabilities may make a NSA a significant component of fuzzier and broader global governance, yet (public) diplomatic actorness is a far-fetched claim. Gregory (2016, 15) maps the boundary between diplomacy and governance very neatly, stating “[d]iplomacy, in contrast to governance, refers to the communication and representation activities through which governance actors manage their relationships and achieve governance-related outcomes.”

Second, justifying NSAs’ activities as PD based on their capabilities, effectiveness, and representation alone is quite subjective. NSAs’ representation of their societies has been questioned due to lack of “democratic legitimacy” and “internal democracy” (Riordan 2008, 140; see also Anderson, 2000, 112-119; Kelley, 2014, 25). In turn, NSAs are not accountable to the public at large and often advocate for particular interests only. A possible way to address this risk is to add one more criterion to PD, which is that NSAs should be accountable to the public interests of a society, rather than private interests only (Gregory 2016).

Although he does not put it that way, Gregory (2016) implicitly distinguishes between public interests and private interests by drawing the line between operational (or development) NGOs and advocacy NGOs (Malena 1995, 14). For him, while Doctors Without Borders (MSF), an operational NGO, is doing PD for public interests, Amnesty International (AI), an advocacy NGO, is not doing PD because, in AI’s case, “private interests dominate” (Gregory 2016, 13, 23-24). There are two problems with Gregory’s distinction between public interests and private interests. First, Gregory’s definition of public interests is arbitrary. His argument is in parallel with the idea that interests of the public “should be defined more in society-wide than state-centric terms” (Ronfeldt and Arquilla 2007, 6), but he considers advocacy NGOs’ activities explicitly for private interests. Neither MSF nor AI is delegated by the public to conduct their activities, but both are interested in producing collective benefits beyond private interests of their boards and constituents. While both lack delegation-based accountability, they might have some participation-based accountability (Grant and Keohane 2005).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, advocacy NGOs are as suitable as operational NGOs to conduct PD as far as the criterion of pursuing public interests is concerned.<sup>23</sup> Second, operational NGOs’ main function is service provision, while advocacy NGOs’ main function is communication with publics. Therefore, contrary to Gregory’s boundaries, advocacy NGOs are more likely to do PD than operational NGOs because of their

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<sup>22</sup> See also Pigman (2014, 95-96).

<sup>23</sup> For operationalization of public interests pursued by an advocacy NGO, see Ayhan (2018).



communication function. The vitality of the communication function in PD is discussed under the title of Accommodative Perspectives.

Those who advocate for diplomacy of behavior treat NSAs' activities as (public) diplomacy based on the understanding that diplomacy exists whenever "there are boundaries for identity and those boundaries of identity are crossed" (Constantinou 1996, 113; see also Der Derian 1987). Such logic widely opens the gates of (public) diplomacy. Using this vague conceptualization, (public) diplomacy can be attributed to a wide range of activities. If this approach is used without clearer boundaries of PD, the term loses its analytical value. This uncertainty over the boundaries of PD puts such views in the Nontraditional Perspectives of the taxonomy. In that respect, these perspectives resonate Nascent School of Diplomacy, in Murray's taxonomy, which "emerged to challenge the" (Murray 2008, 29) state-centric perspectives. Nontraditional Perspectives are inclined to be more normative and idealist as a reaction to the earlier two perspectives which give little weight to NSAs.

#### *Society-Centric Perspectives*

Society-Centric Perspectives share the most traits with Nontraditional Perspectives, except for the definition of *public*. Castells' (2008) article, the most cited article in the sample (267 times), is the primary example of these perspectives. While other articles in the sample view *public* as the foreign publics, Castells interpret *public* as social actors who conduct PD in the global *public* sphere. Based on Castells' conceptualization of PD, Lindholm and Olsson (2011, 255) also "understand the notion of public in terms of both organized nonstate actors as well as the general public." Castells argues that PD is not government diplomacy since there is no need for a new term for that, but "public diplomacy is the diplomacy *of* (emphasis added) the public, that is, the projection in the international arena of the values and ideas of the public" (Castells 2008, 91; see also Hocking 2005, 32). He contends that public sphere acts as a "communication space in which a new, common language could emerge as a precondition for diplomacy" (Castells 2008, 91). In line with Nontraditional Perspectives, Castells also does not make clear which activities of what social actors can be considered as PD and which cannot. According to this view, all "networked communication and shared meaning" (Castells 2008, 91) in the international arena is called PD. Accommodative Perspectives, explained next, offer criteria for exclusivity and thereby provide more analytical value to the boundaries of PD.



### *Accommodative Perspectives*

Another approach to the question of where one draws boundaries is asking whether PD should be defined by the subject who practices it or by the object of the action. Gregory (2008a, 245-246) questions whether NSAs' activities "in support of governance interests and values" should be named differently when they try "to understand, engage and influence" global publics, while the same activities of the states are termed PD.

La Porte's article (2012) is representative of Accommodative Perspectives. She suggests that in the past PD was defined by the subject, but now it should be defined by the object of the action. La Porte bases her arguments on Gregory's (2008b, 276; 2011, 355) objective-based definition of PD which lists "understanding; planning; engagement; and advocacy" as PD's core concepts regardless of the host of the initiative. She attributes PD actorness to NSAs that have legitimacy, defined as confidence and support from constituents; and effectiveness, defined as effective satisfaction of the constituents. Arguing that Gregory's approach lacks clear boundaries, La Porte (2012, 449-450; see also Hayden 2009) proposes two conditions to qualify NSAs as legitimate non-state PD actors: NSAs must be minimally institutionalized, understood as "hav[ing] a basic organization, clear objectives, stable representation and coordinated activity," and have a political agenda, understood as "desir[ing] to have a permanent influence on policies, procedures and international relations."

In a similar vein, in a rare attempt to "[map] the boundaries" between "diplomacy and civil society" and "diplomacy and global governance," Gregory (2016, 13-14) argue that NSAs can be regarded as actors in "diplomacy's public dimension" when their political activities and goals are intentional and serve "governance and public interests rather than private interests." Gregory's 2016 article does not address La Porte's criticisms for his earlier approaches in 2008 and 2011 and leaves a gap in the two authors' attempt to draw the boundaries of PD. This gap is discussed in the next paragraphs, which will include the suggestion of more exclusive boundaries for PD contributing more clearer insight into Accommodative Perspectives.

Another significant condition for distinguishing PD activities from unintentional contributions to PD outcomes is intentionality. While the exercise of soft power, or power in general, may be unintentional through anticipation or by becoming, passively, the city upon a hill, the place others can model themselves after (Arts, 2003; Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Nye, 2004), PD is an intentional policy tool. As such, any definition of PD must be "concerned with purposive acts, not tacit arrangements" (Finkelstein 1995, 369). In other words, the main difference between PD and "other channels ... through which ideas travel, including commercial relations and private communications" is "the intention to direct specific ideas at specific targets for specific political goals" (Scott-Smith 2008, 186). Therefore, intentionality should be a prerequisite for activities to be PD and initiators of the activities to be attributed PD actorness.



In addition to being intentional and politically motivated, PD activity should involve communication as a primary function since PD “operates through essentially communicative practices” (Rasmussen 2009, 266; see also Gilboa 2002, 83; Jönsson and Hall 2003; La Porte 2015, 130; Van Ham 2010, 116; Wang 2006, 42). Following this logic, transnational transactions that lack a communication function, such as service delivery of operational NGOs, should not be recognized as PD.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, this communication must address *estranged* foreign publics and/or transnational communities to achieve PD objectives. Soft power may also target domestic audiences to augment the popularity of a government or a leader or to maintain the unity of a political entity (Lee 2010). On the other hand, in PD’s domestic dimension citizens can become legitimate stakeholders who can participate in policymaking and the practice of PD (Huijgh 2013; Melissen 2013); however, they cannot be a target audience, per se. If there is no “estrangement” (Der Derian 1987; see also Constantinou 1996, 113) between the hosts of the PD initiative and the public, what is being practiced is simply political or strategic communication and not PD. For example, while China’s addressing of domestic constituents could be part of China’s two-level (domestic/ international) soft power strategy (see Lee 2010), it should not be regarded as diplomacy or PD, due to the lack of estrangement (c.f. Manzenreiter 2010; Wang 2008; Zappone 2012).

One question requires clarification regarding the word *diplomacy* in PD. What is the nexus between diplomacy, for that matter PD, and foreign policy? In some languages, “diplomacy” has been a synonym for “foreign policy” while general understanding is that the former is a “means by which such policies are implemented” (Hocking and Lee 2011, 659; see also Clinton 2011; Nicolson 1988, 3). Nevertheless, it is impossible to conceptualize *diplomacy* and *PD* without considering its relationship with foreign policies.<sup>25</sup>

Cull (2013, 125) defines PD as “the conduct of *foreign policy* (emphasis added) by engagement with a foreign public.” In a similar vein, Rasmussen (2010, 263) conceptualizes PD “as a modality of diplomacy that seeks to influence foreign political discourses.” In her comprehensive definition of PD, Zatepilina (2009, 156) argues that “*ultimately*, (emphasis added) public diplomacy seeks to influence” foreign policies of other governments by influencing their citizens’ opinions (Tuch 1990; Manheim 1994; Malone 1988; see also Armstrong 2008).

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<sup>24</sup> For the intersection between development, (particularly development communication) and PD, see Pamment’s works (2015, 2016a, 2016b).

<sup>25</sup> For more on the relationship between PD and foreign policy, see Hayden (2011a) and Sevin (2017).



In addition to influencing foreign policies of other governments, one of the main objectives of PD has always been communicating a country's foreign policies to make these policies more effective and accepted by foreign publics (Pamment 2012, 313; Proedrou and Frangonikolopoulos 2012, 729; The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at The Fletcher School 2002).

In the global arena, countries also employ PD in parallel with their foreign policies “to gain influence and shape [the international] agenda,” sometimes, particularly in the case of small and middle power countries<sup>26</sup>, “in ways that go beyond their limited hard power resources” (Bátora 2005, 1). PD objectives could also be limited to -but still connected to- economy-related foreign policies such as attracting more tourists, international students and foreign direct investment to boost the nation-brand of the country.

Furthermore, PD initiatives can go beyond national interests of particular nations, but still pursue political goals in line with foreign policies or political discourses. Zhang and Swartz add a fourth dimension of PD, promotion of global public goods such as “global efforts to prevent global warming, to form International Criminal Court and to prevent influenza pandemic” (Zhang and Swartz 2009, 383). Transnational advocacy networks also promote foreign policy or discourse changes in a country or globally using communication tools. An important example is the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) which started as a transnational nongovernmental initiative seeking a complete ban on antipersonnel landmines by all states, which is a political goal tied to a significant pillar of foreign policy (defence), that led to the Ottawa Treaty which has been ratified thus far by 162 countries.<sup>27</sup>

Going one step further, Byrne (2016, 117) does not consider programs which are “disconnected from foreign policy ideas” as PD. She points out that Australia's New Colombo Plan (NCP) is distinct from its predecessors as it is the first student mobility program designed as part of Australia's foreign policy portfolio. When PD is detached from foreign policy, it “loses its commonsense meaning and becomes something else” (Wiseman 2015, 298). Furthermore, if PD is not analytically tied to foreign policies, the Gezi Park protests can be labeled as PD (Zaharna and Uysal 2016, 114) and the Internet Corporation on Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) a PD actor (Gregory 2016, 13) depriving the term's conceptual value.

Foreign policy connection is moving beyond the political agenda condition for NSAs' activities to be PD.

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<sup>26</sup> For more on niche diplomacy of small and medium power countries, see Bátora (2005) and Henrikson (2005).

<sup>27</sup> For an analysis of ICBL from a PD perspective, see Zaharna (2007, 2013).



In their seminal work on transnational relations and world politics, Nye and Keohane (1971b, 345) define political behavior as activities “to achieve the modification of other actors’ behavior.” A political agenda that is tied to foreign policy expects modification of other actors’ foreign policy behavior in the most ambitious goals of PD. Less ambitious goals, such as the economy-related goals mentioned above, expect individual-level attitude-behavior changes in the interest of PD actor. Furthermore, activities necessary to achieve these, ambitious or less ambitious, objectives need to be purposive and involve communication that transcends boundaries for them to be PD.

These more structural and coherent views on the place of NSAs in PD fit in the Accommodative Perspectives in the taxonomy. Although not given as much attention in the literature (only four articles in the sample), these approaches accept that NSAs’ activities could be PD, but compared to Nontraditional Perspectives, Accommodative Perspectives offer more clear criteria not to call all transnational activities PD and all kinds of NSAs PD actors.

This article also belongs to the Accommodative Perspectives. As such, here, in order to clarify and summarize the discussion in this section, the criteria for the boundaries of PD which are more exclusive and analytically more coherent are compiled and suggested. The following list is not suggested as a conclusive end to the debate on what constitutes PD;<sup>28</sup> its aim, rather, is to stimulate further discussion on much-needed conceptual boundaries:

- 1) PD actors must be institutionalized at least to some extent (La Porte 2012, 449);
- 2) the activities must have intentional PD objectives (Gregory 2016, 13; Scott-Smith 2008, 186) such as “understand[ing] cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build[ing] and manag[ing] relationships; and influenc[ing] opinions and actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory 2008b, 276);
- 3) the activities must have political goals (Hayden 2009; La Porte 2012) and be connected to foreign policies (Byrne 2016; Cull 2013; Rasmussen 2010) that either contribute to a PD agenda of a government or influence foreign policy changes of governments regardless of being part of a country’s foreign policy or PD agenda;
- 4) communication (Jönsson and Hall 2003; Rasmussen 2009) with foreign publics or the international

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<sup>28</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.



community<sup>29</sup> must be the main tool of the initiative;

5) the initiatives must be for public rather than private interests (Castells 2008; Gregory 2016; Hemery 2005; Peterson 1992; Ronfeldt and Arquilla 2007).

Table 1 and Table 2 summarize the findings of this article in the form of taxonomy.

**Table 1:** Public Diplomacy Perspectives by Definition

			<b>Diplomacy</b>	
			<b>of status</b>	<b>of capabilities</b>
<b>Public</b>	<b>as subject</b>	<b>Vague boundaries</b>	Neo-Statist Perspectives	Society-Centric Perspectives
	<b>as foreign public</b>	<b>Vague boundaries</b>		Nontraditional Perspectives
		<b>Analytical boundaries</b>	State-Centric Perspectives	Accommodative Perspectives

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<sup>29</sup> Either way, “estrangement” (Der Derian 1987; see also Constantinou 1996, 113) must exist between the host of the initiative and the publics/stakeholders.



**Table 2: Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy Perspectives**

	<b>State-Centric Perspectives</b>	<b>Neo-Statist Perspectives</b>	<b>Nontraditional Perspectives</b>	<b>Society-Centric Perspectives</b>	<b>Accommodative Perspectives</b>
<b>Primary examples</b>	(Cull 2013; Dutta-Bergman 2006)	(Lam 2007; Sevin, Kimball, and Khalil 2011)	(Gilboa 2008; Nye 2008)	(Castells 2008; Lindholm and Olsson 2011)	(La Porte 2012; Scott-Smith 2008)
<b>Theoretical tendencies</b>	Rationalism, conventional constructivism	Rationalism, conventional constructivism	Post-anarchy strand of constructivism (issue-areas approach), idealism	Post-anarchy strand of constructivism (issue-areas approach), idealism	Post-anarchy strand of constructivism (issue-areas approach)
<b>Public as</b>	Foreign public	Foreign public and/or subject of PD	Foreign public	Subject of PD (people in the public sphere)	Foreign public
<b>Conditions for PD</b>	Diplomatic status, engagement with foreign publics, political agenda, public interest, intention	Diplomatic status, engagement with foreign publics, political agenda, public interest, intention	Diplomatic capabilities and representation, engagement with foreign and domestic publics	Diplomatic capabilities and representation, engagement with foreign and domestic publics	Legitimacy, effectiveness, political agenda, intention, public interest, estrangement, connection to foreign policies
<b>NSAs as PD actors</b>	No; NSAs' activities can be seen as PD only if state agencies direct them	No, but NSAs' activities can be regarded as social or grassroots diplomacy.	Yes, if NSAs are capable of engaging in PD initiatives	NSAs are primary actors of PD	Yes, only if NSAs meet conditions above
<b>Boundaries of PD</b>	Analytically coherent	Vague	Vague	Vague	Analytically coherent
<b>Count</b>	92 (57.5%)	2 (1.3%)	60 (42.9%)	2 (1.3%)	4 (2.5%)

**Conclusion: Implications for Research and Practice**



PD is a recent academic field that lacks a unified understanding of what it is and who its actors are. If there is to be a meaningful debate in the field, there must be a consensus at least on a minimal definition of PD and its related actors. This requires a closer look at how articles in the field define PD and how they differ from each other. This article analyzed and categorized disparate perspectives about the concept.

The findings suggested five groups of perspectives. Three of them, Neo-Statist Perspectives, Nontraditional Perspectives and Society-Centric Perspectives, are rather conceptually not clear. The other two, State-Centric and Accommodative Perspectives are more analytically coherent.

In summary, State-Centric Perspectives and Neo-Statist Perspectives argue that PD is state-centric. The former claims that public *diplomacy* requires an official status and reject NSAs' activities not only as PD but as any kind of diplomacy, while the latter suggests alternative *diplomacy*-terms for NSAs' PD-like transnational activities. In contrast, Nontraditional, Society-Centric and Accommodative Perspectives regard NSAs' some activities as PD. State-centric definitions do not appreciate the changing environment in which NSAs increasingly employ PD strategies to achieve diplomatic goals through using their capabilities.

Nontraditional Perspectives grew as a response to this denial and make the case that NSAs are new players in the diplomatic field. Although similar to Nontraditional Perspectives, Society-Centric Perspectives have a more radical approach, claiming PD's subject to be people and NSAs in the global public sphere. Where Nontraditional and Society-Centric Perspectives could be criticized as naïve, Accommodative Perspectives take a step back and suggest criteria for NSAs' activities to be PD. While categorizing these disparate views, the last part of this article also belongs to Accommodative Perspectives as it contributes to mapping boundaries between NSAs' PD and other transnational interactions with more exclusive conditions.

This article holds several significant implications for further research. The taxonomy of PD perspectives in this article has introduced more lucidity and coherence to the PD studies. It is the first attempt to produce a research appraisal in the field of PD. Hence, this article reflects trends in PD research. Furthermore, this taxonomy can guide further research on PD and help authors orient their conceptualizations of the term more coherently and consistently by negotiating disparate perspectives behind the definition of PD.

The taxonomy makes identification and critique of different PD perspectives possible. Strengths and weaknesses of each perspective can be studied leading to consolidation of PD as an academic field (Murray 2008). Previous studies often do not clearly state their positions in the debates of PD conceptualization. In turn, few articles attempt to explain the rationale behind choosing a particular definition of the term or the reason behind that choice. Future studies can benefit from this article to form more structural conceptualizations and related justifications.



This taxonomy can benefit policymakers and those new to the field with its survey of PD conceptualizations in this relatively new realm. Governments' PD policies are influenced by debates in the academic field. When it comes to making policies, and practicing PD in the field, governments prefer certain perspectives over others. A direction for future research is to identify how different governments define and practice PD in parallel to the current debates in academia. The taxonomy built in this article can be an initial step in this research endeavor.

Finally, the study of non-state PD cannot move beyond episodic examples without clear boundaries of PD. Merely acknowledging the potential of NSAs, particularly for a country's image and reputation, runs the risk of regarding almost all activities of all kinds of NSAs as PD. This article made the case that any study of non-state PD must begin with a clear and coherent understanding of PD. Last, this article confirms Gilboa's (2008, 57) observation that more studies on the public diplomacy initiatives of non-state actors and non-Western countries are much needed.

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